

4th Sunday of Advent – December 22/23, 2018 – Reflection: “The Angels Candle – Lit in Peace”

It is Luke, the artist, who paints such a beautiful and rich canvas of the night of the dear Savior's birth. At once the colors are deep and warm: the candlelit stable; the farm animals bleating, lowing, chewing, dozing; the swaddling wrap, the sleeping Child, the serene Mother, the humble shepherds looking on. And then, all is light and glory: the stars shining brightly; the angels singing sweetly ... “Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus!” The angels cry glory and draw a broken, violent world to the birth of tiny little Baby, the Prince of Peace. At long last, troubled waters would be calm, rushing winds would be still, crashing thunder, flashing lightning gentle, and for the first time since the heady days in Eden's Garden, there would be no harm or ruin on all god's holy mountain. Peace. Peace on earth and good will toward men.

But there would be no peace. A cruel, fearful old king would seek to destroy the Prince of Peace. Later, others would oppose His peace and stir the mob to call for His blood. On Calvary's hill, thorns and whips and spikes brought agony, mocking tongues ripped the air, darkness covered the light until all the violence sapped the life and left the peace of death.

Even fueled with the breath of new life ... Peace I leave you, my peace I give you ... even fired by the Spirit of peace ... Peace is flowing like a river ... the world will still not accept, over and over again crying: “there

can be no peace, so let there be war!" The followers of the Prince of Peace cannot even accept His rule in their hearts: Peace? No ... let there be persecutions and pogroms, let there be inquisitions and infidels, let there be crosses and crusades, let there be arrogance and abuse, let there be heresy and hellfire, let there be condemnation and chasm ... but, let there be no peace.

On this last Sunday of Advent, we light the Angels Candle, the Peace Candle. But we're in a hurry, let's get this over with, let's move on to the gathering and the giving and the feasting and the returning and the fighting. I'm busy. I'm stressed. I'm mad. I have no time for peace.

This one little flickering candle, this flame so fragile is like the gift it offers, like the Baby who brings it ... Peace ... so fragile ... Peace ... so tiny and helpless ... Peace ... that will never come ... unless ... unless I come to the manger, bow before the little Prince and take His gift, His Peace into my heart ... unless I take that Peace on my tongue to gentle it; in my hands to work for it; in my mind to remember it; in my feet to strive for it; in my heart to offer it.

There will be no Peace, unless I and you become instruments of the dear Savior's Peace and together we become a symphony, a chorus of harmony, amity, euphony that raises the strain throughout the world, "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me!!"